



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 8, 2002

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Alien Smuggling and Bribery Nets Woman 115 Months in Prison

PHOENIX, ARIZONA -- The United States Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona announced today that Cecilia Parra-Sanchez, age 53, of Azuza, California, was sentenced to 115 months in federal prison by United States District Judge Roslyn O. Silver, in Phoenix, Arizona. Sentences of 60 and 70 months in federal prison on California charges transferred to Arizona were also imposed and ordered to be served concurrently.

The activities of Parra-Sanchez were uncovered through extensive investigation and a series of events. On April 10, 1998, Officers of the Union Pacific Railroad Police became suspicious of a group waiting on the passenger platform at the Yuma railroad depot, so the Railroad Police called the Border Patrol Office. After initial investigation, codefendants Enrique Meza-Meza and Sigifredo Ramos-Madrigal were arrested at the depot in Yuma, Arizona, with 13 other aliens who had entered the United States illegally. Meza and Ramos assisted in transporting the 13 aliens to the Yuma depot where they were waiting to be put on the California-bound train. As a result of information given by Meza, the next evening, April 11, 1998, Parra-Sanchez was observed by agents and arrested after she directed two illegal aliens into a hotel room in Yuma. She had arranged for a taxi to transport them to a hotel in Yuma and for their stay at the hotel until they would get further transportation in the United States.

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Evidence seized from PARRA-Sanchez and her own hotel room on April 11 and 12, 1998, including many lists of smuggled aliens recognized by INS agents as “pollo lists” used in smuggling and transporting illegal aliens within the United States, documented that she participated in or directed the smuggling of large numbers of aliens for at least five months prior to her arrest. Extensive investigation by agents from the Anti-Smuggling Office of the Yuma Sector of the Border Patrol garnered sworn testimony by other aliens who had been smuggled to California by, or at the direction of, Parra-Sanchez; subpoenaed telephone toll records; Western Union money transfer records; bank records; motel records; maps of smuggling routes, and other evidence, which evidence documented that Parra-Sanchez had directed or participated in the smuggling of at least 463 aliens between November 13, 1997 and April 11, 1998.

Meanwhile, an independent investigation in the Los Angeles, California, area by the Office of the Inspector General for the Social Security Administration discovered that Ms. Parra-Sanchez had been bribing a Social Security Administration Service Representative to have the representative create fraudulent Social Security accounts and documents for aliens who were illegally in the United States. A federal grand jury for the Central District of California indicted Parra-Sanchez for one count of Conspiracy and seven counts of Bribery of a Public Official, alleging that she would charge each illegal alien between \$300 and \$550 for a fraudulent social security card, and would pay the Social Security Representative \$50 for each application fraudulently processed and approved. The case was eventually transferred to the District of Arizona for Parra-Sanchez to plead guilty to the charges in that indictment.

Parra-Sanchez committed the crimes in Arizona and California while she was on a three-year term of federal supervised release from the Central District of California, after her release from prison in April of 1996. In that case she had been sentenced to 12 months imprisonment for Conspiracy to Make a False Statement on Immigration Documents. Parra-Sanchez had pled guilty to that charge of a 1994 indictment, which alleged that she conspired to present to the Immigration and Naturalization Service false applications

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for political asylum on behalf of aliens illegally in the United States. A petition to revoke her supervised release in that case was also eventually transferred to the District of Arizona.

All three criminal cases were then presented to Judge Silver for disposition. Parra-Sanchez entered a plea of guilty to the Arizona charge of Conspiracy to Transport Illegal Aliens on June 1, 2001. She pled guilty in Phoenix to the California indictment for Conspiracy and Bribery on November 9, 2001. On January 28, 2002, she admitted violating her supervised release in the previous California case. The matters were consolidated for sentencing.

The investigation in this case was conducted by Border Patrol agents lead by Agent Paul Johnson of the Anti-Smuggling Office of the Yuma Sector of the Border Patrol, the Union Pacific Railroad Police, the Office of the Inspector General for the Social Security Administration in Los Angeles and San Bernardino, California, and the Office of the Inspector General for the Department of Justice in El Centro, California.

The prosecution was handled in Arizona by Tim Holtzen, Assistant United States Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix, Arizona. The California prosecution was handled by Lucy Koh and Michael Farhang, Assistant United States Attorneys, Central District of California, Los Angeles, California. The defendant was represented by Gabriel Valdez, Jr.

CASE NUMBER: CR-98-268-PHX-ROS; CR-01-925-PHX-ROS; CR-01-50047-TUC-ROS
RELEASE NUMBER: 2002-077

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